

1. ATTENDANCE

Directors	Ms Leslie Shirreffs (Chair) Ms Anne Clarke Mr John Courtenay Prof Iain Gordon Ms Leah Talbot Mr Scott Buchanan, Executive Director
Official observers	Mr James Newman, Regional Director, Northern Regional Office, Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (NPSR)
WTMA officers	Mr Bruce Jennison, A/Manager, Communities, Aboriginal Partnerships and Tourism Mr Max Chappell, Manager, Planning and Conservation Mrs Rebecca Lagerroth, Manager, Aboriginal Partnerships (item 3.1) Ms Patricia O’Loughlen, Principal Project Officer (item 3.2) Mr Matt Bogart, A/Executive Officer

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chair’s welcome

The chair Leslie Shirreffs opened the meeting at 9.00am and acknowledged the Gimuy Walaburra Yidinji and the Yirrganydji Traditional Owners of the Cairns Area.

The chair acknowledged the Rainforest Aboriginal people, and the Elders past and present of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The chair welcomed directors Ms Anne Clarke, Mr John Courtenay, Prof Iain Gordon and Ms Leah Talbot to the meeting.

The chair welcomed Mr James Newman, the official National Parks, Sport and Racing (NPSR) observer to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies were received from representatives from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (Nick Weinert).

Apologies were received from representatives from the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (Jason Jacobi); Mr James Newman attended to represent NPSR.

Apologies were received from representatives from the Commonwealth Department of Tourism, Major Events and Small Business (Damien Walker).

Apologies were received from representatives from the Commonwealth Department of the Environment (Veronica Blazely).

1.3 Conflict of Interests

Prof Iain Gordon raised that he is employed by James Cook University.

Ms Anne Clarke raised that she is a member of the Kuranda District Residents Group. She has advised the group that she is a member of the board and will no longer be attending the group's meetings.

Resolution

The board noted the potential conflict of interests

1.4 Previous Minutes Meeting No. 94

It was raised that the minutes did not record the chair's direction properly and that a number of actions arising relating to agenda items were not recorded or were lost within the resolutions. Scott Buchanan noted that the Authority holds a separate running sheet of action items. Board members expressed concern that minutes did not read as meeting minutes and that they needed to accurately reflect and capture conversations and actions discussed for future reference. The chair asked the board if they approved the minutes other than the above comments.

Resolution:

The board approves the minutes for Meeting No. 94

Actions:

Actions arising running sheet to be attached to future minutes as an Appendix.

1.5 Actions Arising

WTMA Internal Operating Guideline 19

The Operating Guideline which was endorsed at BM. 94 had been distributed to staff. Copies of the guidelines are to be sent to board directors for their information.

Wet Tropics Board Papers

Scott Buchannan advised the Executive Director's report covered changes made to the board agenda paper template. The board was advised that the three tier (A, B, C) categories were originally established when the Authority had to report to Ministerial Council on a regular basis and seek endorsement for all of its policies and programs. The board agenda paper template now just includes two categories being category A (for major items that will also be referred to Ministerial Forum for

consideration) and category B (for matters which can be decided by the board). The chair noted that the Ministers had devolved a lot more decision making power to the board.

Review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan

It was noted that the Authority is to draft a letter to Minister Miles, Chair of Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum, seeking endorsement to commence the 2018 ten-yearly review of the operation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998. The chair noted that actions relating to general board communications and meetings have all been completed.

The chair noted the Board Communique meeting 94 had been distributed to key Wet Tropics stakeholders.

Resolution:

The board noted actions arising items.

Actions:

- ***Send a copy of Operating Guideline 19 to board directors***
- ***The Authority will prepare a draft letter for signing by the chair to Minister Miles seeking endorsement to commence a review of the operation of the Wet Tropics Management Plan.***

2.0 STANDING REPORTS

2.1 Chair's Report

The chair noted there had been items of significant interest since the last board meeting noting that the Authority has kept a focus on yellow crazy ants as a critical issue. The chair recognised the Froggatt Award from the Australian Invasive Species Council to Lucy Karger, Dr Lori Lach, Daniel Bateman and Frank Teodo. The chair noted the impressive community based partnership and strong leadership shown by the Authority. The board was advised that conversations have been held with Andrew Cox from the Invasive Species Council about collaboration and support and the chair is quite optimistic that engagement with industry will lead to some funding in the upcoming budget.

The chair thanked Scott Buchanan and John Courtenay for their meeting with QLD Treasurer Curtis Pitt about seeking support for the eradication of yellow crazy ants and noted previous engagement with Minister Hunt last year about continuing funding. The chair remains optimistic about the prospects of funding but recognises that it is always prudent to consider other sources of funding for the ongoing eradication program.

The chair also noted the tabling of the 2014-2015 State of the Wet Tropics Report citing an economic benefit of \$5.2 billion to the local economy. The chair urged that this is something the Authority needs to utilise to demonstrate not only the conservation value but other tangible values the property provides.

The chair advised the board that she is scheduled to meet with Minister Miles in early March and Minister Hunt in April, and is hopeful to schedule some time with Senator Nigel Scullion to talk about Indigenous ranger programs. She has also had the opportunity to briefly discuss yellow crazy ants and an Indigenous employment strategy for the Wet Tropics with Treasurer Curtis Pitt. The Treasurer suggested that a future meeting at this Cairns office would be beneficial.

The chair introduced the agenda and noted one of the items, the agenda for a Ministerial Forum proposed that the Authority is to seek a new partnership agreement with both the Australian and State governments at the Ministers Forum in June to provide longer term security. In addition the Authority would seek support for exploring options for revenue-raising to expand the budget base and provide income to achieve client focused outcomes.

The board raised the possibility of user pays and that potentially the tourism industry would be very supportive. The chair clarified that the purpose was looking at a range of possible options of how the Authority could raise revenue for things needed and what is the scope. It was raised with the board that currently Skyrail Rainforest Cableway and Kuranda Scenic Railway are levied and that money goes to the Kuranda Infrastructure Scheme. It was noted the contract is coming to an end which may present an opportunity.

Iain Gordon suggested that it comes back to the State of Wet Tropics Report and the \$5.2 billion in revenue and system services beneficiaries and whether there may be repayment for those services such as water supply. It was suggested that the board have a chance to think about ways in which ecosystem services may be brought into a conversation about the benefits of having World Heritage status. The chair proposed work-shopping ideas at one of the board meetings.

The chair highlighted climate change and its potential to impact World Heritage values and highlighted the board's responsibility to pursue climate change adaptation strategies to protect and preserve the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The chair noted a delay in payment of directors' sitting fees due to payroll issues and that these issues will hopefully have been resolved.

The chair's report finished by outlining items of note on the agenda and congratulating Authority staff on the board field trip held the day before.

Resolution:

The board noted the Chair's Report.

Actions:

The board endorsed convening a workshop to explore funding opportunities.

The board endorsed recognition of Tracy Laird and Terry Carmichael for their excellent organisation of the field trip and the selection of community members that met the board.

2.2 Directors and Observers issues

John Courtenay raised that he and Scott Buchanan had attended a meeting with Treasurer Curtis Pitt. The meeting was quite positive and Treasurer Pitt supported the idea of eradication of yellow crazy ants as opposed to purely management. There was an understanding that there needed to be money provided and this was reflected by a media release that noted this was subject to budgetary constraints. John Courtenay suggested to the board that to prevent job losses resulting from the closing of the electric ant program, it would be better to get the money to keep the electric ant specialists in place and transfer them to the yellow crazy ant program.

Anne Clarke advised she had nothing to note.

Iain Gordon advised the board he had met with Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and the Hon Leanne Donaldson, Minister for Agriculture and

Fisheries. Iain Gordon asked the chair of the protocol in terms of speaking to someone as a director of the board in bringing the Wet Tropics into the conversation. The chair's direction was that there is no problem in the capacity as a director of the board to raise issues that are not confidential. Iain Gordon also alerted the board to the CRC for Developing Northern Australia workshops being held which will be considering the white paper. A workshop is to be held on 4 March in Cairns and recommended the Authority consider having an officer attend. The chair supported the proposal and the board suggested elevating World Heritage into the landscape of the white paper.

Leah Talbot (LT) advised the board that she has had discussions with the Authority about ideas for the Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement Framework report. She noted the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee was about to release the Australian World Heritage Best Practice report in final draft and provided input into the Indigenous components of that report. LT reported that she had asked the Authority to put together notes about the first board meeting that she was to include in a newsletter to Rainforest Aboriginal people. She also put forward the idea of a formal item from the board or the Authority being included into the newsletter after discussion around the engagement strategy.

James Newman provided an overview of the relevant organisational structure of NPSR in relation to protected area management, in particular, the management areas pertaining to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (**scheduled as agenda item 2.4**). Key management themes for protected area management are: fire, pests, assets, visitor management, and interim management.

Resolution

The board noted director's issues

Actions

The Authority will draft an item for a Rainforest Aboriginal people newsletter around the engagement report.

2.3 Executive Director's Report

Scott Buchanan (SB) began by addressing the annual operating projects half yearly review. Scott advised that projects tagged 'green' means they are on target, 'yellow' means the project is delayed but confident the project will get back on track, whereas 'red' means the project is at a real risk of not meeting milestones (refer to **Attachment 2.3 (1)**). Projects currently classed as 'red' are website maintenance, Daintree digital products and the strategic investments strategy. Website maintenance has not progressed as planned due to staffing difficulties. The Authority recognises that the website needs a fairly significant review and this will be addressed in the next financial year.

The Authority has made a media release which resulted in an interview on the ABC which also referred to the yellow crazy ant program.

Resolution:

The board:

- ***noted the Executive Director's report***
- ***approved the adoption of two categories for board papers being category A (for major items that will also be referred to Ministerial Forum for consideration) and category B (for matters which can be decided by the board).***

Actions

The board recommended a Daintree field trip for a future board meeting

3.1 Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement options paper

Mrs Rebecca Lagerroth (RL) briefed the board on the Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement Framework and options paper (refer to **Attachment 3.1 (1)**). The board noted that there has been a long history of engagement and reports on aspirations and that many of these aspirations are the same however priorities may have changed based on the capacity of groups. RL noted that approximately 80% Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is claimable, 37% is recognised and a further 24% is under application. This is quite significant and the relationship the Authority has with Traditional Owners in these areas changes in that regard.

Leah Talbot raised that the World Heritage guidelines have now adopted a clause that requires free, prior and informed consent prior to new nominations and this is a great foundation.

The board discussed whether cultural values that are recognised in the National Heritage Register come under the jurisdiction of the Authority. The board suggested that there is opportunity in the review of the Wet Tropics Management Plan to look at the national and international framework to bring the plan up to date with the environment the Authority is currently operating under. Leah Talbot urged the Authority and the board not to be scared to be innovative in how a management plan may look and that it may result in a very different governance structure that is innovative and reflects Aboriginal people managing cultural values in conjunction with the Authority.

The chair commented that Aboriginal enterprises need to be included in engagement at a local level.

Rebecca Lagerroth outlined the five engagement options to the board, noting that 'leadership group' was a concept and the naming of the group of people who would sit in the group would be determined (refer to **Attachment 3.1 (2)**). The board asked for further clarity between Options 2 and 5 and who would decide the leaders under Option 5. They also voiced concern that who sits on a leadership group is vague. It was clarified that the Authority would take a more active role in facilitating the formation of the group in Option 5.

The chair identified that it would be beneficial to have a broader regional forum inclusive of all voices at some point in the future. The chair recommended that the leadership group be referred to as an 'interim working group'. The board suggested that the Authority consult with the Aboriginal directors to help identify people for the interim working group.

Resolution:

The board endorsed:

- ***the Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement Framework***
- ***Option 5 of the Rainforest Aboriginal Strategic Engagement options paper but replace the term 'leadership group' with 'interim working group' with Option 2 running concurrently.***

Actions:

- ***That the Authority consult with Aboriginal Directors to identify a path forward to establishing the interim working group.***
- ***Host broader regional or issues-based forums as required to capture wider community views.***

- ***investigates international, national and state responsibility in considering and protecting cultural values.***

3.2 Community Engagement Strategy paper

Scott Buchanan and Patricia O’Loughlen presented the Community Engagement Strategy paper to the board (refer to **Attachment 3.2 (1)**). It was recognised that there were three existing formal committees of the Authority being the Community Consultative Committee (CCC), the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Conservation Sector Liaison Group (CSLG) which normally met quarterly prior to board meetings. It was suggested that this arrangement was relatively inflexible and that while these arrangements need to be restructured, it was important to maintain and strengthen existing stakeholder and community communications and networks.

The board recognised that it was important the composition of the committees and reference groups fulfilled the needs of the community and stakeholders. The board noted that the Terms of Reference of the CCC and SAC will need to be revised consistent with Option 2. The board also noted that CSLG is to be disbanded.

The chair noted the following from the discussion:

- The board agreed that having a more flexible engagement structure is the preferred approach
- The board supports a more focused, less frequent meeting schedule for committees
- The SAC and CCC need to be maintained as a statutory requirement and also serve as a feedback loop to the board
- Reference groups or round-tables can be established from time to time to engage relevant stakeholders or stakeholder groups with respect to specific interests or issues. These groups will be disbanded once the issue has been dealt with.
- There is a need to get the Terms of Reference and composition of committees and reference groups right so that they satisfy the community and stakeholders, and the needs of the board
- The CSLG will be disbanded and opportunities investigated on how to best get conservation sector interests represented on the CCC and SAC
- The Authority should meet with the chair of the SAC, CCC and Tourism Tropical North Queensland to discuss how to turn the CCC more into a stakeholder group.

Resolution:

The board endorses Option 2.

The board approves the Authority to consult further to refine components of Option 2.

Actions:

The Authority to review the current Terms of Reference for committees and present recommended revised Terms of Reference at the next Board meeting.

3.3 Individual Board Members Reports

The directors of the board outlined their respective top three priorities they would like to see delivered during the term of the board. The priorities raised were:

- Secure sufficient funding to continue baiting programs and further research of yellow crazy ants as well as develop a specialist management team with a goal of eradication.
- Pursue climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies to protect and conserve the integrity of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Progress a three year (2016 – 2019) Partnership Agreement with NPSR to support management of the protected area estate within the World Heritage Area
- Further engage and partner with Rainforest Aboriginal people to develop economic opportunities through ranger programs, tourism and scientific research within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Recognise and utilise the outcomes of formal scientific research and knowledge held by Rainforest Aboriginal people to shape management of the World Heritage Area.
- Develop a formal mechanism for individuals and institutions conducting research within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to give back to indigenous communities they engage with, through both financial and knowledge transfer arrangements.
- Investigate options for ‘user pays’ mechanisms and how revenue might be used by the Authority in management, presentation and programs as well as to benefit Rainforest Aboriginal people and other communities within the World Heritage Area.
- Deepen the relationship with the community and increase relevance and recognition of the work done by the Authority.
- Improve presentation and marketing of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in conjunction with tourism and other stakeholders.

Actions

The chair will synthesise the priorities proposed by board directors, identify how the priorities relate to the Authority’s Strategic Plan and propose how the above can be integrated into KPI for the Board.

3.4 Theme for State of Wet Tropics Report 2016-2016

Scott Buchanan (SB) informed the board that there has been a thematic approach to the annual State of Wet Tropics Report since 2007 and outlined previous themes. The Authority proposed that the theme for the 2015-2016 State of Wet Tropics report be ‘Ancient, endemic and rare vertebrates of the Wet Tropics’ (refer to **Attachment 3.4 (1)**). SB noted that the Authority would put together potential themes for the next three years of reports for approval at the next board meeting.

Resolution

The board endorsed the theme of ‘Ancient, endemic and rare vertebrates of the Wet Tropics’ as the theme for the 2015-2016 State of the Wet Tropics Report.

Actions

The Authority will propose themes for the 2016, 2017 and 2018 State of the Wet Tropics report at the next board meeting.

3.5 Workforce Capability Plan

Scott Buchanan briefed the board on the workforce of the Authority. The large resource base and experience as well as long term of people in positions was recognised, as was the risk this presented in terms of succession planning and limited opportunities for employing new staff (refer to **Attachment 3.5 (1)**).

The board heard that the purpose of the Strategic Workforce Planning framework was to identify where the skill base was at present, what the future challenges were, and skill gaps and how these could be addressed through training and position resourcing (refer to **Attachment 3.5 (3)**).

The board raised some options for consideration:

- seeking people from around the world who may wish to spend time within the Authority in a sabbatical position
- staff working for short periods within Non-Government Organisations that are partners with the Authority to build capacity and skills
- explore an indigenous employment strategy
- explore exchange arrangement programs with Indigenous organisations
- short term casual positions for university graduates and young people.

The board noted that the Authority needs to identify the type of workforce it wants. The board recognised the value of staff in a mentoring and training capacity where students are brought in from universities and this is of great benefit in knowledge transfer and as a career path guide.

Resolution

The board noted the Strategic Workforce Planning framework agenda paper and looks forward to receiving the report when it becomes available.

3.6 WTMA and NPSR Partnership Agreement

Scott Buchanan (SB) briefed the Board on the history of Authority's agreements with NPSR and noted that the collaboration between the organisations has greatly improved in recent times. The aspiration of both agencies is to enter an agreement for a term of greater than one year, however, this is contingent on the Authority continuing to receive funds from the state government which is then provided back to NPSR for on ground work.

SB advised that the current agreement is simpler and more specific in terms of outcomes than previous agreements and the Authority would like to further streamline and enhance this approach in future partnership agreements.

The board discussed priorities for a new agreement and raised the possibility of a strategy for Indigenous rangers or Indigenous identified positions within the World Heritage Area to be built into the agreement.

The board recommended additions to key priorities for any new agreement to include:

- a new agreement should be for a period of longer than one year (ideally three years)
- vacancies be filled with Indigenous identified positions within the World Heritage Area as they arise
- strategic alignment and prioritisation between the Authority and NPSR to emerging biosecurity and climate change threats

- working collaboratively on opportunities for presentation of the World Heritage Area, including presentation of the 'outstanding universal value' of the Area.

Resolution

The board endorsed the key priorities for a WTMA/NPSR agreement beyond June 2016 with recommended additions.

3.7 Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum June 2016 agenda

The proposed agenda for the Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum Meeting No. 26 was presented to the board (refer to **Attachment 3.7(1)**). The board was reminded that the key issue was that the agenda papers needed to be approved by the board out of session in March distributed by April.

The board heard that funding arrangements for Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was a high priority. Currently there is no formal funding arrangement between state and commonwealth governments and it will be the Authority's position to push an arrangement.

Resolution

The board approved the agenda for the Wet Tropics Ministerial Forum.

Actions

The board will be required to approve final agenda papers out of session in March.

4.1 Issues and Actions resulting from Board field trip 11 February 2016

The board discussed issues arising from the board field trip on 11 February 2016.

The following were the key outcomes:

- The Board re-affirmed their strong support for yellow crazy ant eradication, noting that alternative funding arrangements should be considered; an industry alliance with agriculture and tourism sectors would be a powerful advocate; and the board agreed to pursue a media story highlighting the strong community partnerships and key people involved in the program;
- The Kuranda Visitor Information Centre consisted largely of static displays and that it would be beneficial to engage with the centre to develop more meaningful products to promote the World Heritage Area and its outstanding universal value;
- Agreement that protocols should be developed for Indigenous engagement in research activities in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The board also discussed how changes to the *Biodiscovery Act 2004* might result in legislative support to a scientific protocol;
- Opportunities for Indigenous employment including paid ranger or elder accompaniment during research projects were discussed
- It was noted that the Djabugay Native Title claim gives options for greater management of a large tract of land and that employment of rangers could arise from Indigenous identified positions in a future WTMA/NPSR partnership agreement;

- The board also discussed the potential upgrade to Henry Ross Lookout on the Kuranda Range Road. The board raised the potential for a directional plaque to be included which points to different the country of Traditional Owner groups within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
- The board was supportive of the World Heritage Family presentation and looks forward to further development of the product.

Actions

- ***The Authority to make contact with Tablelands district fruit and vegetable growers associations to inform them about the threat yellow crazy ants could pose to their industry unless they are eradicated.***
- ***Director Iain Gordon to review JCU policy with respect to Indigenous engagement in research activities conducted on country and then discuss this with the SAC once a new SAC is established.***
- ***The Authority is to draft letters of thanks for the Chair's signature to all participants involved in the field trip.***
- ***The Chair will write to relevant Ministers on the Board's progress.***
- ***The Authority will follow up on the yellow crazy ant funding request with Minister of DAF.***
- ***Draft a letter from the Board to Curtis Pitt about the yellow crazy ant program.***
- ***The Authority to continue to collaborate with local member Craig Crawford and DTMR regarding upgrading of Henry Ross Lookout and appropriate World Heritage and cultural heritage interpretation, including the idea of a Rainforest Aboriginal country directional dial.***

4.2 Community meet and greet

The agenda for the evening's community meet and greet was outlined for the board.

4.3 Board communique – meeting No 95

Board directors were provided with a draft of the communique and invited to make comment prior to distribution.

Resolution

The board approved the Wet Tropics Board communique (Attachment 4.3 (1)).

4.4 Board agenda items Meeting No 96

Board directors confirmed that the next meeting on 3-4 May 2016 will be held in Cairns and will include a half day meeting with representatives from stakeholder groups including agriculture, tourism and potentially community services infrastructure providers.

Some of the issues to be included on the agenda include:

- interpretive materials, presentation, badging and use of the World Heritage logo
- suggested Terms of Reference for SAC and CCC and options for appointment of committee members, and support for tourist information centres and budgeting.